sacrifice educated one or more of their children in the Classics in order to obtain immediate prestige in the eyes of the community and with the hope of eventual success in the examinations, which might lead to an official position and enrichment of the family fortune. Thus, education contributed to the upward movement of the families, be they of the landlord, merchant, or bureaucrat groups. On the other hand, the allocation of family income to the support of one or more unproductive persons through years of study, with no assurance of economic returns, often dissipated the fortune of the family and led to the loss of economic status. Too, the belief that those who used their brains were superior to those who used their brawn contributed to the scholars' contempt for manual skills and commercial activity. Therefore, if a scholar did not pass the examination or, having passed it, failed to obtain official appointment, and if the successive divisions of his family property reduced his own holdings to a small plot, he would find it difficult to improve his economic status. At the same time, his lack of economic means would deprive his children of the opportunity to study. Thus, the scholar ideal also contributed to the downward movement of families in the social hierarchy.

The scholars, therefore, are not to be regarded as a separate class or a separate occupational group, except as they relied for their livelihood on the teaching profession or the use of their literary skills in a clerical capacity, but rather as "leisurely" members of families of